

Mercury is an evening star.
Jupiter is also still visible in Capricornus.
Saturn in Leo is only rising in the East.
Neptune is nearly overhead, in Taurus.

THE CONSTELLATIONS.

Auriga is on the meridian, and contains a beautiful yellow star called *Capella*, which is so brilliant as to be considered the brightest star in the Northern Hemisphere by some observers. It is at an immense distance, its light requiring eleven years for transmission to us.

Columba Noachi is also on the meridian, in the South, and is at the end of a straight line running from the North Pole through *Auriga*, *Orion* I., and *Lepus*.

Lepus is situated close to *Orion*, at his feet. It contains no brilliant stars, but a good telescopic nebula and group.

Orion is the finest constellation in the sky, and includes three stars of the first magnitude—*Betelgeux*, *Bellatrix*, and *Rigel*. *Betelgeux* is a variable star, being sometimes brighter than *Rigel*, and at other times less brilliant than *Aldebaran*. It is probably leaving us at the rate of twenty-two miles per second. It is yellowish-red in colour, of the hue of a topaz. *Rigel* is probably receding at the rate of fifteen miles per second, and is pale yellow in colour, with a sapphire-blue attendant. The three bright stars across the centre of the constellation are on the belt of *Orion*, the uppermost one—a red star—lying close to the Equator.

The great Fish-mouth Nebula lies near the handle of *Orion*'s sword, which hangs from his belt. It is impossible to describe the beautiful appearance of this wonderful object in a telescope. Interest in it is intensified by each increase of power, which reveals new wonders and alters even its shape, so that it can scarcely be recognised in different instruments. Another cause of its changing aspect is the variability of the brightness of different parts. The spectroscope proves it to be gaseous, although, before its invention, it was held to be resolvable on account of observations made with Lord Rosse's enormous telescope, but the suspected stars have been proved to be only condensations of nebulous matter.

CHRISTMAS CONTRIBUTIONS.

Aschenbrödel: Cantata with Tableaux.

PROLOGUE.

(CHORUS.)

Flow once more, thou fount of pleasure,
 Chant thy songs in gleeful measure !
 Gladden age with joyous spell,
 Bliss bestowing, magic well !

Eyes are sparkling, glancing, beaming,
 Liquid gems in dewdrops gleaming,
 As the friendly Faëry land
 Blithe, we enter, hand in hand.

Flow again, thou fount of pleasure !
 Sing thy songs in joyous measure !
 List ! for tuneful tale they cry—
 Chant the children's lullaby !

MOTHERLESS. (DECLAMATION.)

Upon white bed a-dying
 Lies a woman, wan and fair :
 Her breath comes feebly sighing :
 Her little daughter, crying,
 Sobs out a child's despair ;
 Death's angel, with sharp icy breath,
 Hath kissed the brow of the mother mild.

* * * * *

The orphan's comfortless tears are shed
 O'er that still form upon the bed.

Let husband lay her
 In quiet churchyard,
 Where birds of the air
 Keep kind watch and ward ;

* Adapted from the German of *Heinrich Carsten*, music by *Carl Reinecke*, published by *Siegel*, Leipzig. Parts for each voice can be had separately, music good and charming, but too difficult for children to sing alone. Might be sung in the background while the children perform *tableaux* in front, or, words might be read, reader invisible.

Their sweet melody
 Shall soothe her to rest ;
 Whilst ivy and roses
 Lie soft on her breast.
 But the child steals away to the spot
 Soon as sorrow has waked her from sleep ;
 And oft, in the starlight, her cot
 Doth she leave to run thither and weep.

THE CHILD'S LAMENT.

(SONG.)

TABLEAU.—While "Child's Lament" is sung or said.

SCENE.—Woody (tall plants, &c.). Semi-darkness : Fair-haired child sitting weeping on stone, in old black frock : bare feet.

Once wore I a frock all trimm'd and gay,
 My mother gave it to me ;
 Blue were mine eyes—now red are they,
 Too dim with tears to see !
 Ah, red mine eyes, and black my garb ;
 As high as heaven, so deep the barb
 Of sorrow hath pierced my heart. How deep,
 God knows ! Nor doth he forget to keep
 His angels a-watching where orphans sleep.

THE STEPMOTHER. (DECLAMATION.)

The winter came, and the soft snow laid
 A coverlet white o'er the mother's grave ;
 And when the spring new gladness made
 The sun took the cover the white snow gave
 Now sing the birds their glad spring song,
 The sorrowful house is gay once more ;
 Cleaning and furbishing all day long,
 Every one blithe and busy as four !
 Garlands weaving, gathering flowers,
 Strewing blossoms in the way,
 Chambers decking as May-bowers—
 Happy be the wedding day !

Now who is the bride brought home this e'en ?
 A beautiful woman of evil mind,
 Who ever, to poor little Madeleine,
 Spite of her meekness, is yet unkind.

Two daughters to her new home she brought,
 Who turned the house all inside out.

And the stepchild must wait upon all,
 Be at every one's beck and call.
 Must spin the yarn,
 Must knit and darn,
 Go brew and bake,
 And the cinders rake ;
 "Cinderella" they call her in the town,
 And people talk of her up and down.

THE WHITE BIRD. (DECLAMATION.)

Again is a busy stir in the hall,
 Ev'ry one bustling in and out ;
 One brings the horses out of the stall ;
 One packs and cords the baggage about ;
 For why ? The master is going away ;
 A distant journey must he take ;
 And, as he mounts, he stoops to say,
 All in merry good-natur'd way—
 "Now, what do you say, girls, suppose I make
 A present to each of you when I come back ?
 Choose what you will, and let me know !"
 "'Tis pearls and gems in gold I lack !"
 Said the elder, bent upon something to show :
 "A gown of some lovely rich stuff, say I,
 And mantle and hood to match, pray buy !"
 The second in forward tones doth cry ;
 Then Madeleine looked in her father's face
 With sweet, meek glance :

"I pray you, bring
 The twig that first bears leaves in the spring :
 Carry it safe in your hat all the way ;
 And loving thanks shall the gift repay."
 Now when the father home returned,
 He brought to each as she desired :
 And Madeleine took the twig she earn'd
 With simple thanks ; it's leaves admir'd ;
 And carried the gift her father gave
 To plant, straightway, on her mother's grave.
 It grows apace, water'd with tears ;
 And, quick—a beauteous tree appears !
 Now, thrice a day, to its shade so still,
 The maiden comes to weep her fill.
 And, lo ! one noon, as there she kneels,
 A shaking amongst the leaves she feels ;
 And a strange white bird flies out of the tree,
 A marvellous bird, as white could be ;

A bird of some wonderful sort, forsooth,
For it sang, still-pois'd, upon snow-white wings,
A song the like of which no bird sings,
For the child understood it in very truth :—

SONG OF THE WHITE BIRD.

(SONG.)

TABLEAU, with "Song of the White Bird."—Large Christmas Tree with birds on it.
Aschenbrödel asleep, leaning her head on her arm, by the tree. *White bird*: Little
child all in white—white shoes and white wings, bending over Aschenbrödel.

Let thy tears no longer flow,
Loving maiden, thou !
Mother's heart in heaven will know ;
Let God rest her now !
Thou so lovely, bright, and fair,
Wilt thou not thy grief forbear ?

What thou wishest, will I bring ;
Wilt have happy dream ?
Would'st a song ? Then will I sing,
Here, beside this stream.
Such black sorrow is not meet
For maid, fair and bright and sweet !

Stay I, waiting thy behest ;
What gift shall I bring ?
White plumes spread on eager quest—
As I fly, I sing !
Maiden, beauteous, fair, and bright,
Dwell no more without delight !

DECLAMATION.

Startled into sudden pleasure
By this bird's melodious measure,
Mad'leine tosses golden tresses
As child gladden'd by caresses ;
Tears and smiles play hide and seek
In dewy eyes, on flushing cheek,
The while the gentle bird doth sway
Up and down a slender spray
The maiden's heated brow to fan ;
Who e'er saw such pretty play ?
Now it befalls that to royal feast
The king doth summon greatest and least ;

All the loveliest maids in the land
In whatsoever estate they stand,
Maidens of high or of low degree,
So they be beauteous and so they be free :
Delightful tidings ! east, north, south,
The news is carried from mouth to mouth
As sweetest melody borne by the air.
For, hist ! 'Tis whisper'd about, d'ye see,
That the feast shall in truth a bride-show be,
So the prince may choose and fitly pair !
Aschenbrödel's sisters invited were,
And lost their heads for glee at the thought ;
Already each sees herself picked out
From throng of maidens to be the bride
One day to sit the king beside
As royal consort, distinction rare !
So they dress'd them out in splendid array,
Rich robes, gold broider'd, their forms display ;
With pearls and blossoms they deck their hair.
Then Aschenbrödel took heart and spake :
" Sisters, I pray, take me to the ball !
I only crave to stand in the hall,
Or, should it please you, to bear your train.
From dancing one measure would I refrain,—
For who should ask poor maid like me ?
Ah, say not nay, for kindness' sake ?"
Then the stepmother, out laughed she :
" Art mad, Aschenbrödel ? Here's a pretty thing,
The kitchen-girl go to the court of the king !"
Then, quick to the lentil sack she ran,
Dipp'd out a shovelful, scatter'd them free
Amongst the ashes—a sight to see !
" There, idle hussy, let's see if you can
Pick up the lentils, every one.
Nor leave a seed on the hearth ! Why, so,
If in two hours thy task is done,
Mayest thou with thy betters go ;
There's a fair offer. Let's hear no more !"
Aschenbrödel slipp'd quickly out
When none of the others was about
Into the garden by back door ;—
" Hither, birds, to my aid !
Birds all, great and small,
Be kind to poor maid,
Help me to the ball !"

ASCHENBRÖDEL'S PRAYER TO THE BIRDS. (SONG.)

TABLEAU, accompanying Aschenbrödel's prayer to the birds.—Aschenbrödel in the centre surrounded by birds. Children dressed as robins, blackbirds, chaffinches, doves, canaries, love birds, &c. Scene as before—woody. Birds attentive, as listening to Aschenbrödel. Curtain drawn for a moment. Aschenbrödel disappears. Peas scattered on stage. *TABLEAU*, to "Bird's Chorus."—Birds flitting about lightly and quickly picking peas—putting, now in mouth, now in pot. Movements as in Grand Chain—last figure of Lancers.

Hither come, ye dainty white doves,
Out of arbours, out of alcoves,
From the airy heights of heaven,
Flock ye at my signal given !
Hither come on flashing pinions,
Leave awhile your wide dominions,
Bring good aid to friendless maiden,
Send me hence with lentils laden.
The good in the pot drop,
The bad for the birds' crop !

DECLAMATION (WITH MUSIC).

Into the kitchen troop the birds,
With nods and becks more wise than words
They set to work : the peas in the pot
Within the hour are securely got,
And, that the labour lighten'd be,
They cheer the task with melody.

CHORUS OF BIRDS.—(SONG.)

Be quick, be quick,
To help the child !
Be quick, be quick,
That in the pot
The lentils drop
Ere time runs out !
Be quick, be quick,
Ere time runs out !
The good in the pot drop,
The bad for the birds' crop !
Gurr, gurr, züküh, kiwütt.

DECLAMATION.

" See, mother, here, the lentils all !
Now, may I go with you to the ball ? "
Laugh'd the stepmother in scornful way :
" What, go to court in petticoat gray ?

Why, wench, thou'rt mad, art mad, I say !
Yet, never say but I treat thee well :
Two shovelfuls in the ashes strewn
Canst thou pick out and bring me soon,
In an hour at most, why, who can tell
But I let thee go by way of boon ? "
Quick, Aschenbrödel steals away
Through the door that into the garden leads,
Where, waiting her will, are the birds at play :
Once more in song she tells her needs :—

Aschenbrödel's Song (*as before*). Declamation (with Music) *as before*.
Chorus of Birds (*as before*).

DECLAMATION.

" See, mother, here the lentils all,
Now, may I go with you to the ball ? "
Astonish'd, the wicked woman sat,
For how deny that here was a wonder ?
So, sneering,—" A pretty pastime that !
Out of my sight, away with thy plunder !
It helps thee nothing, thou shalt not come."
And with that, both she and her girls leave home.
Again, Aschenbrödel, alone and free,
Betakes her for comfort to her tree.

ASCHENBRÖDEL'S SONG.

TABLEAU, Aschenbrödel's Song.—Tree to the *Side*. Aschenbrödel sits with clasped hands gazing at it. Aschenbrödel dressed in ball costume, but covered with shabby black cloak. During song, some one throws from *Side* necklace, bracelet, &c., as if dropped from tree, which is hung with tinsel. End of song Aschenbrödel rises, drops cloak. *Tableau*.

ASCHENBRÖDEL'S SONG.

Stir thee, little tree ;
Shake thee, little tree !
Robes of a princess,
Lustrous and priceless,
Cast over me.
Stir thee, little tree ;
Shake thee, little tree !
Pearl softly gleaming,
Diamond bright-beaming,
Gay golden slippers
Draw from thy coffers ;
Rings, with gems rare set,
Costliest bracelet,

These shalt thou give me,
 Thou shalt bedeck me.
 Stir thee, little tree ;
 Shake thee, little tree !
 Robes of a princess,
 Lustrous and priceless,
 Cast over me.

DECLAMATION.

The tree did all as the maiden bade ;
 And, more, up drew a chariot of state :
 "Come, Aschenbrödel, away and be glad,
 Off with thee, now, to the palace gate !"
 Is it real ? Is she dreaming ?
 Now she steps through lofty halls,
 Many thousand tapers streaming
 Light the banners on the walls :
 In the palm tree's crown above her
 See, the white doves sit or flutter ;
 Here, fountains out-pouring
 From gold mussel shells ;
 There, happy guests laughing
 As light music swells ;
 Now, fair children singing
 As in the dance swinging—
 What a dream of delight is it all !

CHORUS OF THE DANCING CHILDREN.

TABLEAU, to Chorus of Dancing Children.—Aschenbrödel with Prince—standing on steps in background. Two sisters gazing enviously (right). Eight children dancing Old English saraband to the first chorus. Three children on either side of steps scattering flowers.

Bend the knee lowly,
 Sing lovely ditties,
 Sing lovely ditties in sweet harmony.
 Bright garlands weaving
 From the Flower-goddess,
 Fair Flora, a boon ;
 Sweet blossoms wreathing,
 The summer's warm blossoms,
 In purple festoon ;
 That in all hearts here
 The blind god awake !
 With smart, O how tender,
 The blind god awake !
 Bend the knee lowly,
 Sing lovely ditties
 In sweet harmony ;

Bright garlands weaving
 From the Flower-goddess,
 Fair Flora, a boon.

DECLAMATION.

And while the children sing of love,
 The Prince's ardent glances rove
 O'er all the throng on her to rest ;
 Light he steps, and, courteous, sueing,
 Begs her hand, not yet a wooing,
 But to lead her through the dance ;
 "For as moonlight softly streaming,
 Falls on me the modest beaming,
 Sweetest maiden, of thy glance !"
 And the maiden, trembling, bashful,
 Yields her hand to his fond prayer ;
 Now she eyes him, timid, fitful ;
 Fixed the gaze he bends on her.
 But scarce the Prince his arm around
 The maiden's lovely form has wound,
 To lead her through the waltz, when, lo !
 "Wouldst fly from me ?" he sudden cries,
 And in that moment of surprise,
 Lo, she hath vanish'd from the scene !
 No trace to show where she hath been.
 Home she hies with hasty flight,
 Doffs her garments of delight,
 Dons the grey petticoat as before—
 Behold the Aschenbrödel of yore !
 Meanwhile the Prince hunts far and wide
 For the maiden vanish'd from his side.
 Again does the night draw in,
 And again does the feast begin ;
 And Aschenbrödel, alone and free,
 Runs again to her own dear tree :
 "Stir thee, little tree ;
 Haste thee, little tree ;
 Garments quite queenly
 Cast over me."
 More beauteous yet than the night before,
 Steps she in at the palace door :
 And scarce had her feet the threshold cross'd
 Than the Prince reclaims his partner lost ;
 In graceful measure, through lighted halls,
 Carries her swift, with bounding heart ;
 Every eye follows the pair,
 And the children, lovely choir,
 Joyous sing, their hearts t'inspire
 With melting music—this their part.

SONG OF THE DANCING CHILDREN.

TABLEAU to second Chorus of Children.—Children arranged in background.
Aschenbrödel and Prince and two sisters, paired, standing in attitude for minuet

Fount of pleasure,
Chant thy measure !
Hither flying
Come the white doves,
Gather from their leafy alcoves ;
Over bubbling spring now hov'ring,
Coolness, gladness, here recov'ring.
See, they sway them hither, thither,
Rest light wings, and then, say, whither ?
Fount of pleasure,
Chant thy measure !

DECLAMATION.

Again, *twelve* has sounded,
The maiden has flown !
As one confounded
Stands the king's son.
Home she hies with hasty flight,
Doffs her garments of delight,
Dons the grey petticoat as before,
Behold the Aschenbrödel of yore !
Now doth the Prince to his seneschal call,
"Soon as, third time, in the castle, all
The bidden guests shall appear,
Hasten thou the steps to besmear
With sticky wax, that whoso flee
Be caught, and compell'd to tarry for me."
Once again, as the night draws in,
For the third time doth the feast begin.
Surpassing herself in loveliness,
Aschenbrödel comes the Prince to bless ;
Gladdens him with the light of her face
Till he forgets or time, or place,
And thinks that no hereafter bliss
Can bring him happiness like to this.
Again the clang of the midnight hour
Is heard from the furthest castle tower ;
And, hist ! the maiden is out of sight,
Through hall and court has made good her flight ;
But when her hasty footsteps fleet
Have reached the steps that lead to the street,
Her soles stick fast ! For gold nor love,
Never a step can she further move !
Hither, the Prince with eager haste,
Clasps her hand in close embrace,

And cries, "Now, witness the trick I play,
Thou'rt mine and mine only from this day !
Hold I thee fast, nor will let thee flee
For time or for eternity,
Maiden beloved !"
Then stepp'd they back into the hall,—
"Noble ladies, valiant knights,
Pray you, welcome my sweet bride,
She, the crown of all delights,
Standing meekly by my side !"
She, confused, with blushing face,
"Sir, you do me too much grace !
How could little Aschenbrödel
Wed her with a consort royal ?"
But he stopp'd her mouth with a kiss,
Seal and sign of wedded bliss !
Meanwhile, all wan and yellow with spite,
Slink the bad sisters out of sight.
Now a dove, silver white,
From the palm-tree's crown
In circles of light
Comes hovering down.
Round and round the maiden flying,
Light, so light, its pinions plying,
Fanning, soft, the maiden's cheek,
And a smile, all heavenly meek,
Plays about her lips the while,
And the words which she doth speak
Tell the meaning of her smile.

ASCHENBRÖDEL'S PEACE-SONG.

TABLEAU to Song of Peace.—Aschenbrödel and Prince (centre, back). Sisters kneeling,
holding Aschenbrödel's hands. Children and courtiers arranged picturesquely.

See you how peace is taught us here ;
E'en so, in peace, let us draw near ;
Come, now, and give your hands to me ;
Forgotten, forgiven, all sorrow be
That once from you I bore ;
Forgiv'n for evermore !
See you how peace is taught us here ?
E'en so, in peace, let us draw near.

[The whole effect will be greatly enhanced if the songs are *sung*. Half-a-dozen good singers could manage the choruses at sight. The chorus parts can be had for 1s. each ; the songs 6d. The whole work can be had with *pianoforte* accompaniments. May be ordered through Augener, or any music publisher, but the words are in German. Therefore we offer this adaptation to our readers.]

A short account of how we managed a children's party might possibly interest the readers of the *Parents' Review*. We had invited all our little guests to play at picture-making, so commenced our preparations three days beforehand.

We first got two picture frames, 4 ft. by 2½ ft., which a joiner fixed against standing posts, so near to the back wall that only single figures could walk to and fro. The frames were raised 3 ft. from the ground, and 2 ft. from each other. Black gauze was tightly nailed on the back of each. Arras cloth was draped round each frame and between them, and behind each hung a small curtain on a cord which ran on rollers, so as to enable the showman to quickly draw them. The background was composed of a clothes horse covered with a large black shawl. About 1½ ft. from the front of the frames, and 3 ft. from the ground, fourteen tin footlights containing candles were nailed to a wooden rail, also draped with the Arras cloth.

With the help of friends, we quickly made eighteen little dresses out of the very cheapest art muslin. We first drew up a list of characters, and decided who should represent each. The list included Bo-Peep, Reynolds' Innocence and Simplicity, Millais' Cherry Ripe, Jack and Jill, Polly and Sukey, Pierrot, A Little Jap, Where are you going to my pretty Maid? Lord Fauntleroy, Quite Ready (the last two were taken by little mites just two years old), King and Queen of Hearts, Leslie's Valentine, Babes in the Wood, &c.

At three o'clock on the eventful day the little guests arrived punctually with their mothers and nurses, and the children were at once taken upstairs to dress, while the elders had tea in the drawing room. At four o'clock the spectators took their places for the performance, and as soon as they had settled down, and the gas was put out, the little actors came in and sat in front. A showman opened the proceedings with a few introductory remarks, he then drew the curtain aside, and a little figure was seen in each frame. As soon as the curtain shut out the pictures the next actors were called, and the two first ones took their seats with the audience. While the figures were being posed and placed at the right height in the frames, the showman gave a little account of them, making it as amusing as showmen only know how to on these occasions.

When the picture-play was over, the little ones had tea—still keeping on their costumes—and after this played musical chairs, dumb charades, &c., until seven o'clock, when the dresses were changed, and all went home. One mother said afterwards, "It was not only beautiful at the time, but it gave the children so many pretty ideas and thoughts to think and talk about for many days."

MATER.

We have lately learned a new game called "Telegrams," which may be made very amusing for the long winter evenings of the Christmas holiday. Each person is provided with pencil and paper, and they sit round a table. Everyone writes down a letter, folds the paper back, and passes it on. This continues until twelve letters have been written on each paper. The papers are then collected and dealt out. The object now is to make an exciting

telegram, each word of which begins with one of the given letters in their given order. Sometimes very amusing telegrams are produced, but they require more thought than one would suppose. Here are some: "Thomas arrived, discovered thief, reclaimed jewels. To Aden, Beeches, Windsor." "Arrived safely, rough passage, narrow escape from drowning, very sea-sick." As in the second, we often omit the direction, although it is not correct, but it makes it more amusing. At the end of the game one person reads out the telegrams, which are generally received with shouts of laughter.

K. H. D.

Books.

"En hoexkens ende boexkens."

I limit my books this month to three or four—all fairy tales. The first and by far the best is "English Fairy Tales," by S. Jacobs (Nutt, 6s.). This is treasure trove. Many of the stories are new even to professed fairy-tale readers, and several are old stories in a new dress. The preface is sensible, the illustrations by Mr. Batten are excellent, and the learned notes at the end give the student just as much light as he requires. The best stories are "Cap o' Rushes," "Mister Fox," "The Fish and the Ring," and "Tom Tit Tot."

Mr. Lang has added to our fairy books by publishing the "Red Fairy Book" (Longmans, 5s.). This is a second gleanings in the fields of fairyland. The authorities laid under contribution are Madame D'Aubrey, the Volsunga Saga, M. Henri Carnoy, and the well-known Ashbgoensen and Moy. The illustrations are even better than those in Mr. Lang's "Blue Fairy Book" (Longmans, 5s.), which delighted all children a year ago.

Mr. Frank Stockton has written with kind regards to good giants and fairies a series of charming tales in his own peculiar way—"Ting-a-ling Tales" (3s. 6d.?). There are only four or five, but for children they are fifty, for each tale contains many funny incidents which an experienced mother or sister may well enlarge. The illustrations are not so good as those noticed above.

Mr. Oscar Wilde (O that he could always write for children and not for a world that has forgotten its simplicity) has published a second edition of "The Happy Prince" (3s. 6d.), with illustrations by Walter Crane. The book is worth its price even for the first tale alone. Children will not understand the irony, but they will grasp the simple lessons which this book tries honestly to enforce.

Messrs. Sonnenschein publish a "Fairy Library of All Nations" (5s. and 3s. 6d. per volume). Perhaps the books are more suited to the student than to the child, but the bad may be easily let alone, and the good may be